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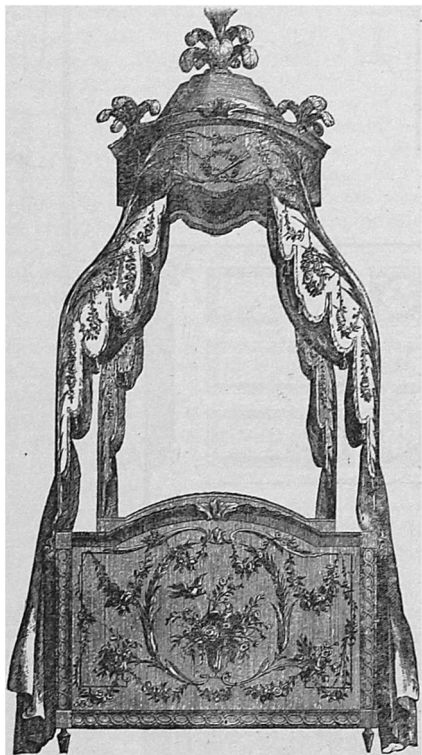
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FRENCH HOUSE FURNISHING.

BY THEODORE CHILD.

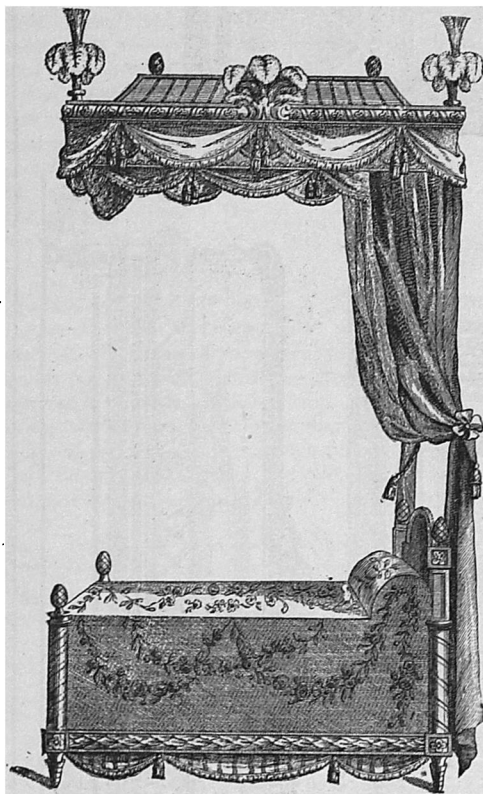
THE BEDROOM.—III. (Continued from page 51.)

THE Hôtel Rambouillet, so famous in French literary history on account of the influence exercised by the society that met there, on the taste and language of the XVIII. century, had also a remarkable influence on household architecture and furnishing. The Marquise de Rambouillet, being a woman of delicate health, applied her



BED "A LA POLONAISE."

natural taste to rendering her house delightful, and above all, comfortable. At the age of twenty she gave up going to the court assemblies at the Louvre, and conceived the idea of holding receptions of her own. How noted the receptions of the Hôtel Rambouillet were, especially from about 1624 to 1645, I need not say. At that time several rival houses had been opened; the era of the *salons* had begun—an era which was destined to replace the stately society of the reign of Louis XIV., with its heavy and pompous surroundings of the varied elegance and polished grace of the



BED "A LA DUCHESSE."

society of the XVIII. century. Of Mme. de Rambouillet's house, unfortunately, no graphic representations remain. We know, however, from Tallemant des Réaux that Mme. de Rambouillet was her own architect; that she was the first to place the staircase at the side of the house in order to have suites of rooms opening one into the other; that she had her rooms built with lofty ceilings and high and large doors and windows; and finally, that she was the first to have a bedroom painted any other color than red or tan. Mme. de Rambouillet's bedroom, where she received her visitors, was upholstered in blue velvet, relieved with gold and silver, and the windows of it

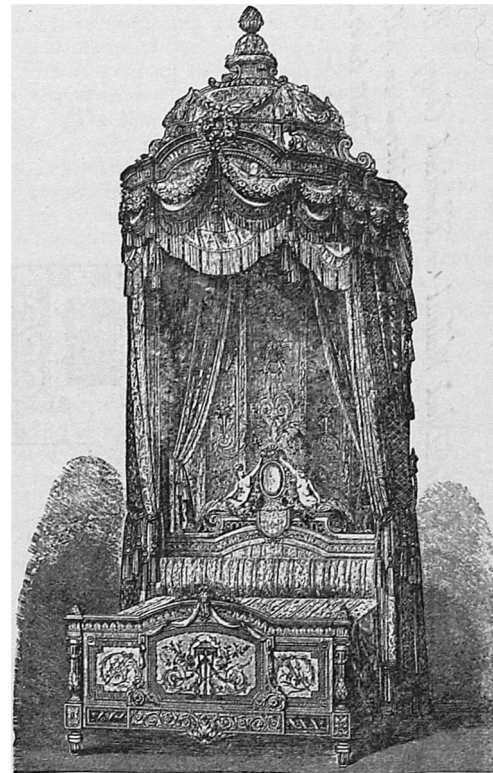
came down to the level of the floor, so that the view into the garden was not intercepted. Then, being delicate enough to be sensitive to draughts—a phenomenon to which our robust forefathers do not seem to have paid much attention—the Marquise introduced the use of screens, which formed an indispensable article of bedroom furniture throughout the XVIII. century, and the use of which I find recommended by a modern English writer, Lady Barker. In the domestic architecture of the XVIII. century the reforms introduced by Mme. de Rambouillet were maintained, notably the windows coming down to the floor, the suites of rooms, and above all, the lofty ceilings. In speaking of the furniture of the XVIII. century, this latter detail must always be borne in mind—the rooms were then almost twice as high as the rooms of the ordinary modern French house.

The memoirs, the engravings, the novels, the pictures, the gazettes of the XVIII. century are full of information as to the bedroom of that time. We have been made familiar with the minutest details of the furniture and the smallest habits of those who used it, by a mass of piquant anecdotes. The XVIII. century is a century of refined voluptuousness; the bed-chamber is the room that best characterizes the epoch, for it is the domain of woman, who is the sovereign of the XVIII. century; it is her battle-field, the scene of her exploits, her grace, her coquetry, her triumphs and her apotheosis. From the time she gets up until midnight, and during the *levee* which, with the thousand refinements of the toilet, was often prolonged until twelve or one o'clock, her bedroom is full of friends and adorers who gossip, sup, or play with the little toy-dog, who has his kennel at the foot of the bed. At length bedtime arrives, and M. de Goncourt has given us the following picture of this moment, after a drawing by Freudeberg: "Near the chimney-piece, where the bright fire is marked by a screen of Beauvais tapestry, by the side of the double step bordered with gilt-headed nails, in front of the bed, with its crown-shaped tester decorated with tufts of plumes, and with its sheets puffed up by the warming-pan held by a chamber-maid, the woman standing on a velvet pile carpet, is being undressed by her maid. The candles in the brackets are going out; the mistress asks for her night-light, and behind her, in a frame dimly lighted, a Cupid laughs, as if he were to be the god of her dreams and the angel of her night."

The bed itself assumes a great variety of forms, and the drapery employs all kinds of stuffs, damask from Genoa, Lyons and Tours; brocades, stuffs woven with silk and gold, lampas, cambrie, chintz and cotton stuffs of gay color and designs either of flowers and foliage or simply stripes. In the arrangement of this drapery, too, the greatest variety prevails, according as the bed is a state bed or a simple bed, placed in the middle of the room, or in a corner, or in an alcove, with a dome canopy or with a flat canopy, etc., etc. And each of these arrangements has a name—*lit d'ange*, *lit à l'impériale*, *à la duchesse*, *à la polonoise*, *à la turque*, *à tombeau*, *à la romaine*, *à pavillon*, etc. And all the beds of the XVIII. century are monumental in proportions—vast beds where the birth and death of humanity was at its ease, and whatever be their form, whether partaking of the voluptuous grace of the Louis XV. style or of the comparative severity of the style of Louis XVI., they are never morose. Whatever the character and whatever the fortune of a woman of the XVIII. century, she always had an exquisite sentiment of elegance and a purity of taste whose dictates the women of the present day are happy to accept without question. For, while the styles of Henri II., Louis XIII. and of the Renaissance find many advocates amongst the men, the styles of Louis XV., Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette continue to enjoy the high favor of the French women of the present day, and so between the tastes of the men and the tastes of the women the modern French cabinet-makers, to the despair of the critics, show a more and more marked tendency to live in the past, to reproduce the models of the past, inasmuch that, as things are at present, cabinet-making in France threatens to cease to be a living industry. However, while joining with the critics in their regret at the want of individuality in the furniture of the present day, we cannot help feeling some satisfaction in seeing that some of the modern French artists who have sought inspiration in the models of the XVIII. century have certainly equalled the grace and elegance of their masters. The bed in the Louis XVI. style, *à l'impériale*, shown in the accompanying engraving, and designed and made by M. Henri Fourdinois, is certainly as pure and splendid a bed as any XVIII. century artist ever imagined. As for all the other varieties of beds above mentioned, there is, of course, not space

in this journal to give cuts of them all; the reader will be satisfied with representations of some of the most characteristic.

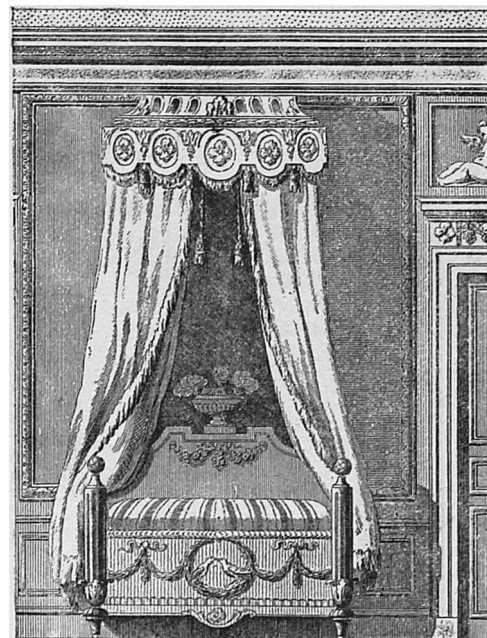
The XVIII. century bedsteads, whether of ancient or modern manufacture, vary from extreme simplicity to extreme richness of ornamentation. We have bedsteads and accompanying furniture veneered with tortoise-shell and arabesques of pewter and brass, relieved by engraving in the manner invented by André Charles Boule. This brilliant mosaic is still further accompanied by bas-reliefs in chilled bronze, mascarons, arabesques,



BED "L'IMPERIALE," STYLE LOUIS XVI.

capitals, cornices, etc., in ormolu, forming a frame for the whole, and affording points of attraction for the light, calculated to prevent the eye from losing itself in the dazzling maze of the metallic incrustation. The application of Boule incrustation to bedroom furniture is, however, not to be recommended; it is essentially adapted to show furniture for parade rooms, and rather to tables, bureaux, pedestals, cupboards, corner-pieces, etc., than to an object of the nature of a bedstead. The modern Boule bedroom furniture now largely manufactured in Paris, is rarely tasteful or even effective.

Incrustation of different colored woods, *marqueterie*, so much used in the Louis XV. epoch, is used very sparingly in the decoration of bedsteads.



BED "D'ANGE."

On the other hand, the fantastic frizzy brass ornaments known by the name of *rocaille*, are largely used, and then in the midst of these finely chiselled applications of gilt ornaments, medallions and plaques of porcelain were frequently let in; Sevres plaques painted with bouquets or figures bordered with turquoise blue, Wedgwood cameos, and even panels of oriental lacquer. The perfection of decoration by means of application of *mat* gold ornaments and porcelain plaques is one of the characteristics of the Louis XVI. style, of that furniture which is without the exaggeration of contour and redundancy of accessories so noticeable in the work of the Louis XV. epoch, and which

represents so admirably the spirit of the XVIII. century in France, that is to say, distinction and elegance and grace without affectation.

Another specialty of the XVIII. century is the application of lacquer to furniture, and especially of the transparent varnish called *Vernis Martin*, from its inventor, and which was so limpid that it could be applied over paintings. Several of the modern Parisian makers have devoted themselves especially to the manufacture of furniture in the pure Louis XV. style, lacquered in gold or *piqué*, and on this rich background, mythological or pastoral subjects finely painted in the style of Boucher and Fragonard, and ornamented with delicately carved bronze ornaments.

Nothing could be more fitted for the adornment of the bed-chamber and boudoir of mature beauty than the rich and warm grace of *Vernis Martin*.

Amongst other characteristics of the furniture of the XVIII. century we may note that the epoch of Louis XIV. is that of the triumph of carved and gilded wood; the epoch of Louis XV. continues the triumph of gilding, and adds to it the extravagance of brass ornaments.

Under Louis XVI., epoch of delicacy of all kinds, wood enters upon a new phase. Its forms are simplified, as we shall see later on when we come to talk of furniture in general, and not only do the details become fine and exquisite, instead of capricious and extravagant, but it pushes coquetry so far as to abandon gold altogether, and appears with a simple vesture of white paint, relieved sometimes by a thread or molding of lilac or azure blue. In the pure Louis XVI. bed the head-board and foot-board are alike, the panels are upholstered with silk, damask or flowered chintz, which leaves visible alone the fluted pillars and the delicious carving of garlands and pearls adorning the *fronton*. Often the Louis XVI. beds are of solid mahogany or rosewood, with simple fluted columns, the flutings of which may be filled in with burnished brass. This latter model without the brass fittings is now largely manufactured in yellow pine and in white lacquered wood.

We have seen how the reform in house architecture was begun by a woman, the Marquise de Rambouillet. Henceforward ease of life was no longer sacrificed to show; rooms which were formerly accessory assume primary importance; the bed-chamber becomes a sort of private temple; the boudoir replaces the pompous galleries of the Louvre and Versailles. The large chimneys with bas-reliefs and heavy hangings, are replaced by small chimney-pieces surmounted by looking-glasses; and the ceilings, formerly peopled with figures of heroes and demi-gods, are replaced by cloudy domains animated by Venus and her court. The doors acquire circular tops; the panels over them are filled with nymphs and birds; the walls

are wainscoted and covered with panels ornamented with elegant and varied interlacings of sculptured garlands and borders of flowers. Everywhere the outline disappears; the straight line is proscribed, and the forms, losing their severe fixity, turn to prettiness, charming or rustic grace. The furniture is as glittering and brilliant as the walls with their gilded moldings and cornices; the wood of the furniture is gilded and upholstered in lampas and damask and satin of the tenderest colors. The tapestries are covered with scenes of joyous dances and be-ribboned rustic fêtes, shepherds, fives and pan-pipes. Cupid is

master of the place; the little god is ubiquitous, universal, omnipotent in Louis XV. decoration, and the furniture of the epoch shows its respect for Cupid above all in its research for comfort. Twenty new forms of chairs are invented, and in none of these forms is there an angle. The bed itself throws off its heavy curtains; its tester grows round, and assumes by preference the form of a dome bedecked with plumes and fringe. Nevertheless, in the midst of all the capricious and fanciful inventions of this epoch, a man of

taste, by avoiding the exaggeration of artists of small merit, who seized upon current ideas only in their excessive characteristics, may find the elements of a charming suite of furniture, especially for a bedroom, boudoir, or *retiré*. Who would not desire a bedroom such as Bastide has described in his *Petite Maison*? A square room with the corners filled in and fitted with looking-glasses; an upholstered bed of Jonquil colored chintz decorated with gay-colored flowers placed

their rounded forms the grace and voluptuous charm of the room.

But one thing must be borne in mind: if you furnish your rooms in the Louis XV. style, in default of being elegant yourself, which is next to impossible with our present masculine fashions, you must insist upon your women folk dressing themselves in the most delicious and exquisite manner, so that they may not mar, by an incongruous dowdiness, the fantastic and delicate effect of your interior. It might even be well for the ladies to powder their hair, at least on reception days.

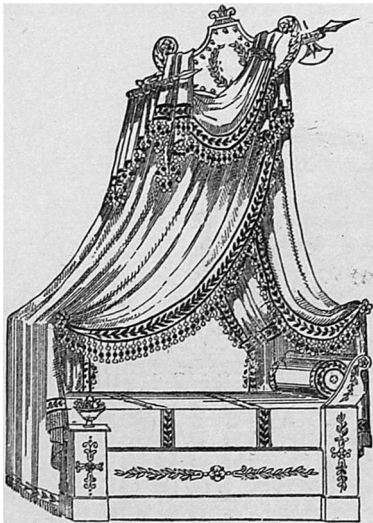
IV.

After the French Revolution, during the Directory and the first empire, the forms of beds were modified to suit the reigning ideas. Made like all the rest of the furniture of the epoch, in mahogany, maple or rosewood, the empire beds resemble antique monuments and affect classical Greek designs, volutes, horns of abundance and vases, with the drapery arranged in a manner characteristic of the occupation of the person for whose use the bed was destined, and adorned with heavy gilt and bronze ornaments, reproducing

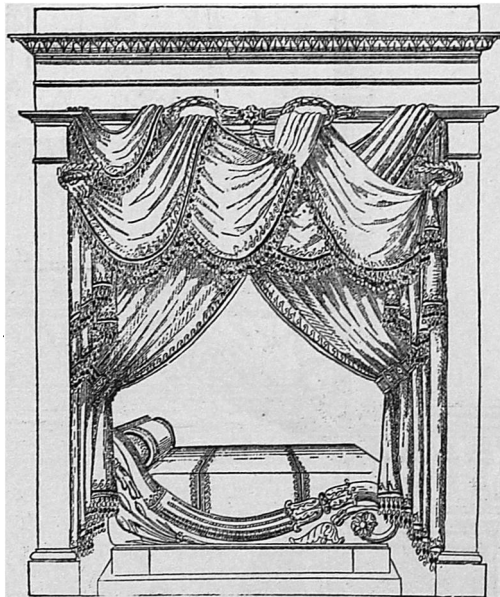
classical attributes, javelins, bows, battle-axes, pikes, etc. The *lit à la Neptune* resembled a ship of the Homeric times; the curtains were hung around a mast, and the lines of the bed and of the drapery were agitated and tempestuous, and, as Charles Blanc says, "of a nature to give the spectator a foretaste of sea-sickness." The soldier's bed, the *lit guerrier*, was surmounted by a trophy of arms, to which were attached, not curtains, but "draperies destined to protect the sleeper from

the air and the insects during the night." The beds placed in alcoves are surmounted by a classical cornice and flanked by pillars of Ionic or Doric or bastard style, so as to remind one of an antique temple, and the drapery rolled and enlarged and twisted in an incredibly abominable manner, rendered still more abominable by the crudity of the blue, yellow and red colors of the stuffs. The hideousness, heaviness and pretentious pomposity of the furniture of the first empire are preserved, for the edification of travelers, in very many of the Parisian hotels in the neighborhood of the Rue de la Paix and the Faubourg Saint Honoré.

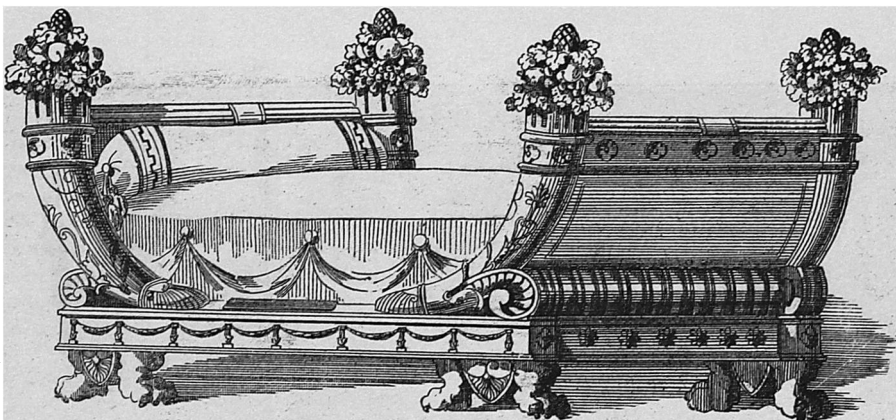
Up to 1840 the French beds continue to be ungraceful in form, and ridiculously overloaded with carvings and bronze ornaments. About that time there was a beginning of a revival of taste; only, instead of devising something new, the makers, influenced by the public taste, still under the influence of the Romantic movement, yielded to an archaeological mania, and began copying the models of the past. This craze for imitation is still in full activity; and so, with the creations of the empire, we close our historical review of the different forms of French bedsteads.



"SOLDIER'S BED," STYLE OF THE EMPIRE.

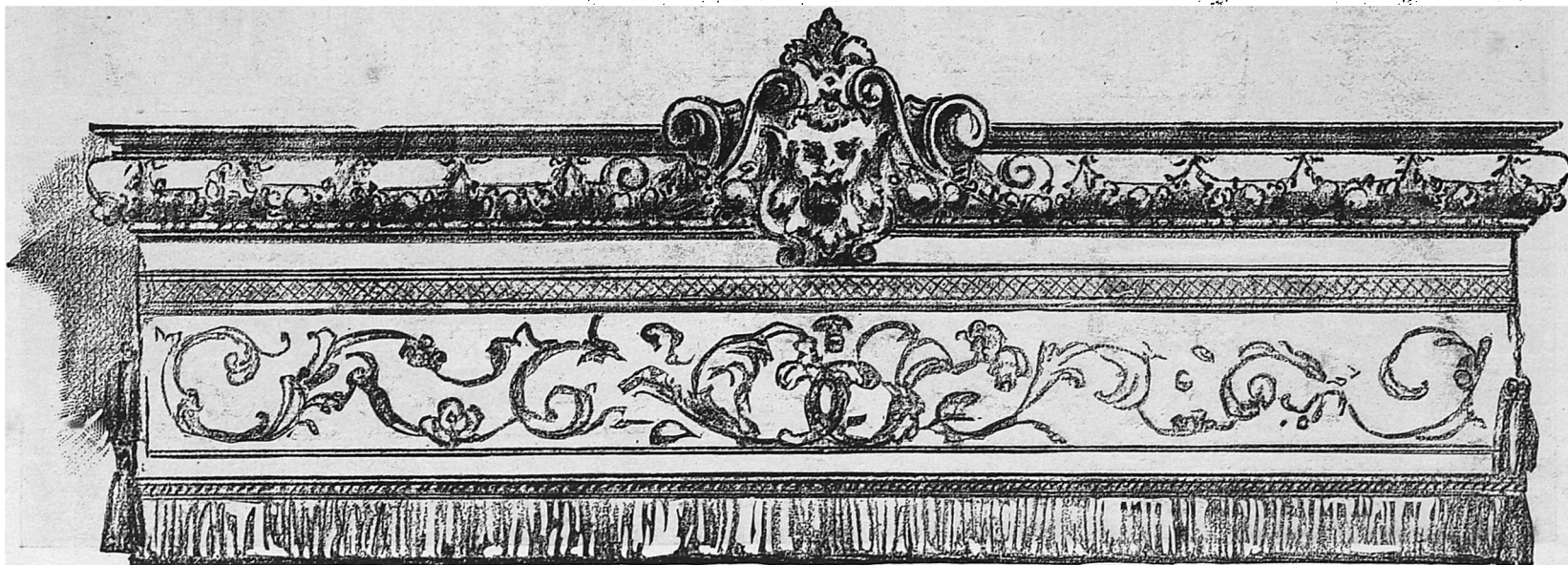


BED-ALCOVE, STYLE OF THE EMPIRE.

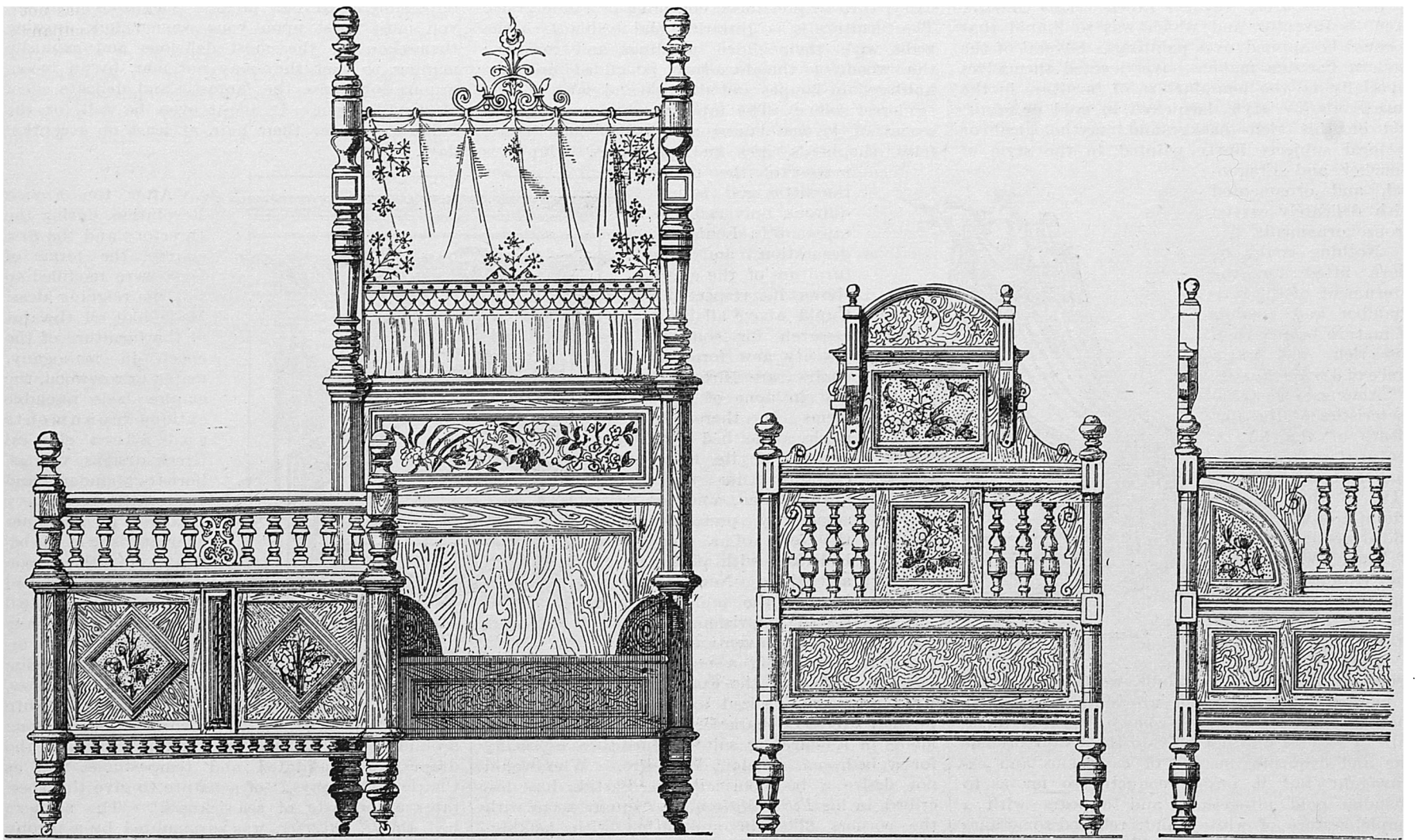


BED OF NAPOLEON I.

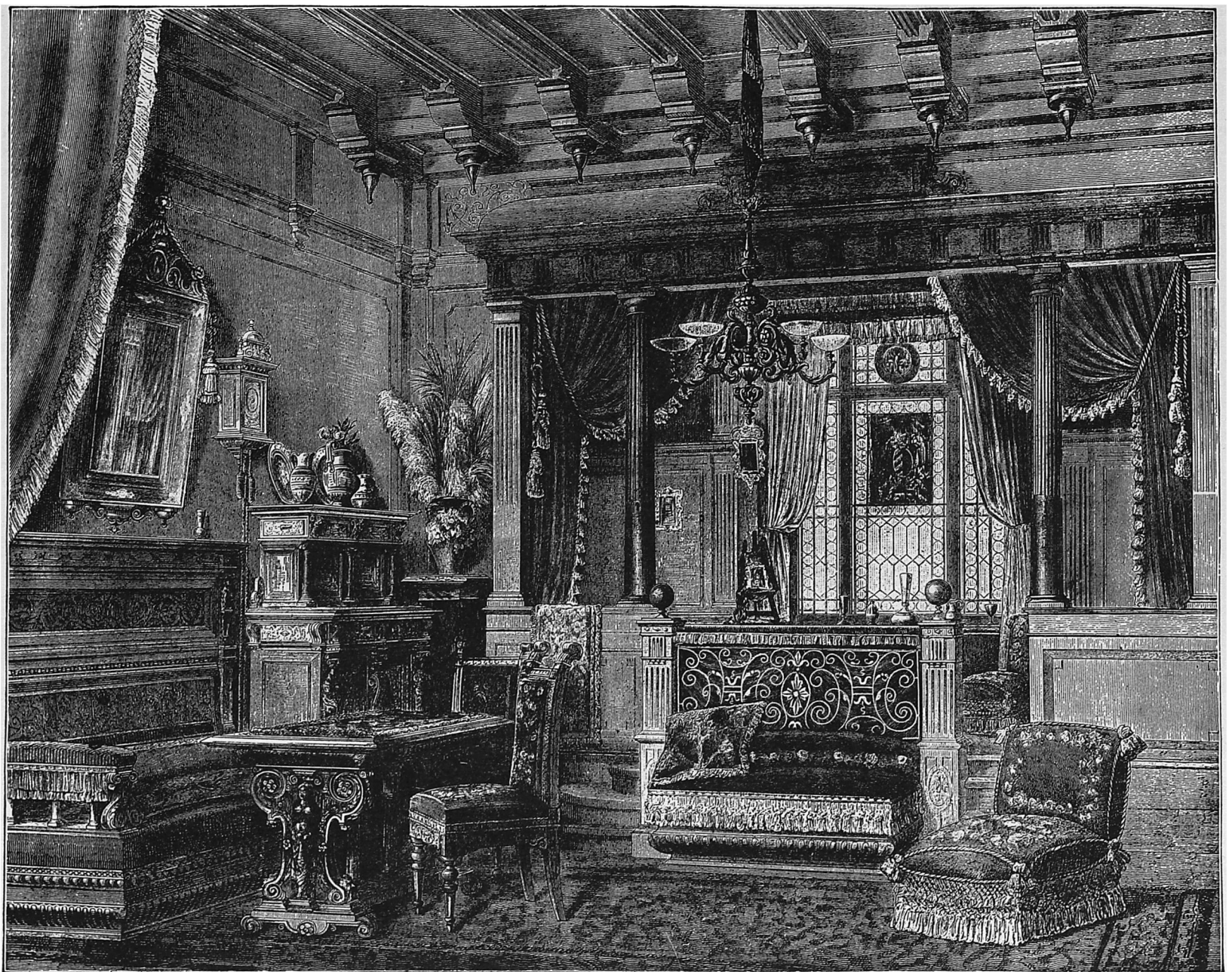
in an alcove facing one of the windows looking on the garden; the ceiling vaulted round the edges and containing in a central circular frame a painting of Hercules in the arms of Sleep awakened by Love; the paneling tinted light sulphur color; the floor of marqueterie of cedar and amaranth wood; the chimney-piece of blue marble, as also are the tops of the console tables placed under each of the looking-glasses; on these consoles are bronzes and porcelain, and scattered about the room, chairs and other furniture expressing by



FRENCH CORNICE AND LAMBREQUIN—FROM ORIGINAL PARISIAN SKETCH.



DESIGNS FOR CHILDRENS BEDSTEADS.



PARLOR FURNITURE, BY WIRTH BROTHERS, STUTTGART.